

White House Officials Call Firing an Act of "Political Courage"

WASHINGTON. D.C. – House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA) today asked Acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of California Lawrence G. Brown to answer critical questions about communications with the White House that led to the dismissal of AmeriCorps IG Gerald Walpin and the legal basis for a number of assertions made in an April 29, 2009, complaint to the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE).

“Many in Congress believe the White House’s statement to House and Senate leadership that it ‘is no longer the case with regard to this Inspector General’ that the President has ‘the fullest confidence’ is inadequate according to the requirements put in place by the IG Reform Act. The Committee’s investigation into whether or not the President’s action complied with the requirements of the IG Act requires us to consider whether or not the material considered by the White House is reliable,” wrote Issa in his letter to Brown. “The allegations that form the basis for your complaint seem very ordinary, which makes the fact that you pursued sanctions against Mr. Walpin seem extraordinary by contrast. This begs certain questions about the reasons the complaint was filed.”

In a June 17 meeting with House Oversight and Government Reform Committee investigators, White House lawyers refused to answer specific questions about Walpin's dismissal but described the decision to fire IG Walpin as an act of "political courage" needed because of differences between the IG the AmeriCorps board.

"Gerald Walpin led an aggressive investigation of a political ally of President Obama that successfully recovered taxpayer dollars," said Rep. Issa. "While firing an investigator who uncovered the abuse of funds by a political ally might be considered an act of 'political courage' in Chicago politics, for most Americans it raises troubling questions."

"IGs aren't supposed to have warm fuzzy relationships with the people they're charged with overseeing. Gerald Walpin has struck our investigators as fully competent and able to answer all questions posed to him. We see nothing that supports the Administration's 'crazy old man' theory."

“If the White House does not offer a fuller and more complete explanation and supporting evidence of the reasons and process for firing Mr. Walpin, it will have a chilling effect on Inspectors General who consider launching investigations that target waste, fraud and abuse by friends of the President.”

[Click here to read a copy of the letter to the Acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of California.](#)